

IN THE CLAIMS:

1-57. (Canceled)

58. (Currently Amended) A method for removing intervertebral disc material, comprising the steps of:

creating a working channel from a patient's skin to an intervertebral disc space;
providing a protector, said protector having a longitudinal axis and including
retractor having first and second generally rectangular, planar blade members fixed in
position relative to one another to form a generally V-shaped construct for establishing a
barrier, said construct having a longitudinal axis extending in a generally parallel
orientation relative to said longitudinal axis of said protector;

positioning [[a]] said protector near an entrance into said intervertebral disc space between [[a]] said brush member working channel and at least [[one]] two of neural tissue, dura tissue, and vasculature adjacent to said entrance, said protector having a longitudinal axis and including retractor having at least two generally rectangular, planar blade members fixed in position relative to one another to form a generally V-shaped construct for establishing a barrier between said brush member and said body tissue adjaceent to said entrance, said construct having a longitudinal axis extending in a generally parallel orientation relative to said longitudinal axis of said protector such that said first blade member prevents neural tissue from migrating into said working channel, and said second blade member prevents at least one of dura tissue and vasculature from migrating into said channel;

inserting [[said]] a brush member through the working channel into said intervertebral disc space, said brush member having a length ranging from 0.25 to 4.0 inches, a diameter ranging from 0.082 to 1.225 inches, and a plurality of bristle members disposed in a helical configuration defining a capacity for carrying intervertebral disc material [[;]] wherein said protector prevents contact between said brush member, said neural tissue and said at least one of dura tissue and vasculature;

manipulating said brush member within said intervertebral disc space to receive

intervertebral disc material within said brush member; and
removing said brush member from said intervertebral disc space.

59. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 58, wherein said step of creating a working channel to the intervertebral disc space is accomplished via at least one of percutaneous surgical procedure and an open surgical procedure.
60. (Canceled)
61. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 58, wherein said protector further comprises a cannula dimensioned to extend to said entrance of said intervertebral disc space, said cannula having an inner lumen dimensioned to slideably receive said brush member for passage into said intervertebral disc space.
62. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 58, wherein said brush member includes a stem member, and further including the step of providing a drive assembly capable of engaging with said stem member for manipulating said brush member within said intervertebral disc space.
63. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 62, wherein said drive assembly comprises one of a powered drive assembly coupled to said stem member and a manual drive assembly coupled to said stem member.
64. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 63, wherein said powered drive assembly is a power drill.
65. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 63, wherein said manual drive assembly includes a handle member capable of being coupled to said stem member.

66. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 65, wherein said manual drive assembly includes an extension member coupled to said handle and a quick-connect coupling assembly for releasable connection to said stem member.
67. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 63, wherein said drive assembly includes a stop member coupled to said stem member for controlling the depth to which said brush member can be advanced into said intervertebral disc space.
68. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 61, wherein said cannula includes a lip member at a distal end thereof dimensioned to retract at least one of said neural tissue, dura tissue, and vasculature adjacent to said spine.
69. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 61, wherein said inner lumen of said cannula and said brush member have approximately the same cross-sectional shape.

70-74. (Canceled)